A Gift for CASA

Just after Thanksgiving 1989 a baby girl was born. Ten years later the young girl was entrusted to the Department of Social Services and placed in foster care. A CASA volunteer was assigned. Over the next eight years, the child experienced 11 placements, 18 court hearings, and five social workers. Just before Christmas in 2007, the 18-year-old child became — in the eyes of the law — an adult and left the system behind. Her CASA volunteer, who had remained with her for eight years, was dismissed from the case.

On October 14, 2009 a young woman walked up the steps at 100 Court Square to Piedmont CASA and asked to see her CASA volunteer. She wanted to see her CASA worker because, as she put it, the CASA was the only one to “make a difference” and “was always there for me.”

At Piedmont CASA we count this story as one of our great successes. Although this child spent years of her life engaged with a system that was unable to meet fully her needs for stability and structure, much less provide her with the kind of love and nurturing we all believe children deserve, she WAS provided a CASA volunteer. The CASA volunteer couldn’t act as a mother, a teacher, or even a mentor — but she could be there to listen and report, to gather information and disseminate it, to be ever-present and stable during a time that was primarily marked by upheaval and uncertainty.

Like the young girl who was assigned her CASA Volunteer in December 1999 and who left the system in December 2007, many children find themselves in court, through no fault of their own, during the holidays. This time of year, which is supposed to be full of joy and celebration with family, can instead be a time of loneliness and sadness for hundreds of local children. At Piedmont CASA we are always aware at this time of year that many of the children we serve are not able to be with their families and loved ones. Instead they are spending the season in foster homes, residential facilities, group homes and sometimes, hospitals. Foster parents, social workers, therapists, group home supervisors and the other caring adults are aware of how hard the holiday season can be for children who are not living at home. Like them, CASA volunteers make special efforts to visit with their CASA children during a time that is supposed to be full of fun and joy, hoping to help ease the pain that marks their lives.

This year, as the holidays approached, the young woman directed her steps toward Piedmont CASA hoping to reconnect with her CASA volunteer. Despite the fact that the CASA volunteer had retired and moved out of state, the connection was made: the former volunteer joyfully reported that the young woman lives successfully on her own, is employed and is taking classes at the local community college. When the former CASA child sought out her volunteer, she was hoping to reestablish a relationship that was a significant part of her youth. In the process she gave the volunteer the knowledge that her eight years of advocacy were significant and meaningful. And having that child come back into her life, what a gift!
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July 1, 2008 – June 30, 2009

A Special Thanks to Our Contributors

*With Gratitude from the Ronald McDonald House of Virginia
Piedmont CASA Honors Its Volunteer Advocates 2009

10 - 14 years
Diane Berkeley
Lucretia Blythe
Crystal Canada
Phoebe Froisch
Catherine Mancuso

3 - 5 years
Delores Alt
Liz Blankenship
Doug Brown
Ann Faz
Amy Saltzman
Eric Sartain
Linda Shaw
Jean Shepard
Erin Spencer
Ellie Stadlmaier
Jim Stadlmaier
Melissa Vanderplatts

3 - 5 years
Alicia Milligan
Rob Mooney
Rebecca Mooney
Cynthia Neff
Ann Pax
Amy Saltzman
Eric Sartain
Linda Shaw
Jean Shepard
Erin Spencer
Ellie Stadlmaier
Jim Stadlmaier
Melissa Vanderplatts

6 - 9 years
Evette Carto
Steven Cooper
Virginia Daugherty
Georgia King
Daisy Moga
David Moga
Douglas Morris
Terry Petty
Susan Roberts
Joe Ronan
Lindsey Schwab
Al Stone
Patty Thomas-Cato
Scott Walk

6 - 9 years
Evette Carto
Steven Cooper
Virginia Daugherty
Georgia King
Daisy Moga
David Moga
Douglas Morris
Terry Petty
Susan Roberts
Joe Ronan
Lindsey Schwab
Al Stone
Patty Thomas-Cato
Scott Walk

Up to 2 years
Janet Aving
Patricia Adler
Pat Angeles
Amalia Belcher
Billy Benson
Heather Boe
Janet Bonner

Up to 2 years
Janet Aving
Patricia Adler
Pat Angeles
Amalia Belcher
Billy Benson
Heather Boe
Janet Bonner

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Patricia Adler
Pat Angeles
Amalia Belcher
Billy Benson
Heather Boe
Janet Bonner

Volunteer Activity Highlights:

- Piedmont CASA trained 40 new CASA volunteers;
- Advocates were assigned to 83 new children (compared with 70 the previous year);
- Cases were successfully closed for 68 children; Of the closed cases, advocates were assigned to their children an average of 19 months;
- 124 independent investigations were conducted;
- 338 hearings were attended;
- 7,086 contacts were made by CASA volunteers with children, parents, physicians, therapists, social workers, attorneys and others;
- 960 monthly monitoring reports were submitted by CASA volunteers;
- Volunteers with Piedmont CASA contributed 11,389 hours in services working on behalf of child abuse victims;
- 8 children remained on Piedmont CASA's waiting list at the end of the year.

Spring Training Starts in March 2010!

Please call Piedmont CASA at (434) 971-7515 or email pcasa@embarqmail.com for an application, or apply on-line at www.pcasa.org.
When you send in your gift to Piedmont CASA, do you wonder about the children who will benefit directly from your generosity? They aren’t usually on the news and they don’t usually make the front page of local newspapers -- the child who witnesses violent arguments between his drunken parents; the daughter sexually assaulted by her mother’s boyfriend; brothers and sisters living in a home with bugs, animal feces, rotting food and garbage; or the teenage girl who overdosed to escape the pain of her mother’s verbal abuse.

Sadly, most of the abused and neglected children we serve live quietly under the radar, waiting for someone to step in and make a difference for them. It’s only when their circumstances become severe enough or continue long enough that the system can start the process of rescuing them from caregivers who can’t or won’t take proper care of them.

CASA children live in a hidden world devastated by family secrets. CASA volunteers are assigned to the most serious cases requiring court intervention. Volunteer advocates get to know the children and their situations, independently investigating the circumstances that brought them to court. These efforts culminate with written recommendations to our local judges as to what services and outcomes are in the children’s best interests.

Last year, our volunteers helped locate relatives; they ensured the enrollment of children in after school activities; they advocated for siblings to stay together in foster care; they helped assure appropriate medical treatment for asthma, a bacterial infection and dental needs; they notified social services of the presence of a registered sex offender in a child’s home; they helped arrange therapy for grief, loss and anger following separation from family; they pinpointed the need for counseling in response to stress; and they facilitated proper school placement.

The CASA volunteers’ efforts to remain a positive force of continuity and advocacy are unmatched, and they are bound only by the time they have to give. The need for their service cannot be overstated. Virginia ranks 46th out of the 50 states on spending to protect children — only $37.24 per child. Our volunteers donate, on average, $1,000 worth of their time, to each CASA child.

When you send in your gift to Piedmont CASA, 89 cents of every dollar goes directly to the program services for children. Piedmont CASA volunteers make a difference for the children they serve, and because of your help we are able to assign more volunteers to more children. We, and these local children, say thank you.

Ruth L. Stone

Financial Summary:
July 1, 2008–June 30, 2009

**Expenses:**
- Program Services: $504,540.00
- Administration: $25,201.00
- Fundraising: $37,092.00

**Total Expenses:** $566,833.00

**Income:**
- Donations: $238,664.00
- Foundations, Clubs & Churches: $62,745.00
- Local Government Grants: $17,850.00
- State/Federal Grants: $119,458.00
- Other: $3,851.00

**Total Income:** $442,568.00

**Notes:**
1. We Can Do Better, Child Abuse and Neglect Deaths in America, Every Child Matters Education Fund, Washington, D.C.
2. Virginia Office on Volunteerism Value of Volunteer Time

Louise Dudley, Chair
**The Children We Serve**

Last year 103 CASA volunteers served 210 child victims, a 12% increase over FY 08. Of the 210 children ages birth to 18, 90 were girls and 120 were boys, a 27% increase in the number of boys. Three children were African; 73 Black/African American; seven Hispanic/Latino; one Middle Eastern; 39 multi-racial; and 87 White.

**CASA Makes a Difference**

Piedmont CASA tracks the well-being of children served by the volunteers. Of the 68 children whose cases were closed last year:

- 100% of children remained free from new incidents of abuse or neglect;
- 92% of children with health needs received the medical care they needed;
- 100% of children with mental health concerns benefited from improvement in emotional well-being and/or received appropriate therapeutic services;
- 100% of school age children with educational concerns demonstrated grade-level academic performance, or received remedial services; and
- 100% of the children served by the program remained free from new “founded” incidents of abuse and/or neglect.

**CASA VOLUNTEERS ARE ORDINARY PEOPLE WHO DO EXTRAORDINARY THINGS FOR CHILDREN.**